Edith Thompson Jones Palmer (1926-2012) Oral History Interview, c. 2005 Victor Norfus interviewer

Boynton Beach City Library Local History Archives

Biographical note:

Edith Delores Thompson was born 15 October 1926 to Wilfred A. Thompson (1904-1962) and Blanche Ophelia Johnson Thompson (1908-1991) in Miami, Florida. In 1940, following the divorce of her parents, Edith came to Boynton Beach, Florida to live with an elderly Aunt. In 1942, she married to Charles H. Jones, and they had two daughters before they divorced in 1952. She would live the remainder of her life in Boynton Beach. In 1960, she married Angelo Palmer in 1960 and they were divorced in the 1967.

She began her work life in various jobs from housekeeper and cook in private homes; as a small business shopkeeper; waitress and later, as a Sales and Customer Representative for the Afro-American Life Insurance Company. At the time of her retirement, her work history included serving as a housekeeper/cook for two Palm Beach County seasonal families for more than 15 years consecutively. From 1955 and 1967 worked at the LaFrance Hotel, the only hotel for Black people between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale in segregated Florida. The hotel was owned by Charlie Patrick and his wife, Francenia Johnson Patrick, a cousin of Edith Palmer's.

For more than 15 years she was an active member of St. Paul A.M.E. Church. For more than 10 years she served as the church's Financial Secretary. In 1960, she initiated an annual church event known as "The Pink Tea," an event attended widely by the faith community throughout Palm Beach County. At the end of the 1960s, Mrs. Palmer joined St. John Missionary Baptist Church, Boynton Beach, Florida, playing an active role in the education program. In 2009, she was feted at her retirement from more than 55 years service as a Sunday School teacher and Christian education leader by both churches. Following a brief illness, she died on 10 February 2012 leaving two daughters, five grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren.

Interview summary:

During the interview, Edith Palmer is being asked about the people listed on a document, possibly a 1918 church roll of St. Paul's AME Church or St. John Missionary Baptist Church. Many of the families on the list were still in residence while Edith Palmer lived and visited Boynton Beach. The family of Ed Meeks is significantly discussed (the interviewer's uncle). Also discussed are schools available for Black community in the early 20th century, and racist limitations on movement in the 1940s-1960s.

Interviewed by Victor Norfus.

Keywords:

- Boynton Beach (Fla.)—History
- African Americans—Florida—Boynton Beach--History
- Palmer, Edith Delores Thompson, 1926-2012—Interviews
- Norfus, Victor D.--Interviewer

Interview details:

- 0:00:08 Father and grandmother (actually great aunt) Euturphy Glinton Thompson (1874-1947)
- 0:07:49 Arthur Johnson's Quarters
- 0:15:28 Methodist Church pastor Epps
- 0:16:49 Two Irene Butlers, one a teacher and one the wife of James Butler.
- 0:18:34 Josephine Smith's restaurant on 10th Avenue, which served bread pudding.
- 0:21:09 Henry Culverson
- 0:27:22 Only way into Black community was from Federal Highway
- 0:30:11 Ed Meeks family
- 0:32:23 LaFrance Hotel name
- 0:33:34 Coconut trees
- 0:34:50 Nathaniel H. Major (1872–1935) family
- 0:37:22 Ed Meeks, moving house from Jacksonville
- 0:39:44 Cicero and Allie Milton
- 0:41:38 Possibly about activism and the KKK in 1940s Boynton, but much too damaged to understand
- 0:44:55 Wilson Recreation Center
- 0:48:06 Ed Meeks family
- 0:50:20 Roberts family
- 0:52:52 Roberts addition, Wells addition, Andrews and Meeks addition
- 0:54:10 Smiths, Kings.
- 0:59:30 Palm Beach Industrial High.
- 1:00:40 Schools
- 1:01:39 Cleo Phoenix, Maggie Pugh
- 1:05:01 Reverends at St. Paul's Church
- 1:07:53 Richest Black person: Ed Meeks
- 1:09:09 Did not know any Indians in area
- 1:10:15 Mr. Waxman
- 1:11:10 Drawing a map

Technical note:

Finding aid created March 2023 by Georgen Charnes.
Damaged VHS tape. Digitized 1/19/2023 by Delray Camera.
1 digital file: palmer.mp4 (1 hour, 18 minutes, and 9 seconds)

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Interview transcript:

(EP-Edith Palmer; VN-Victor Norfus)

00:03

[Old video material.]

00:08

[Interview in process. Edith Palmer holding a sheet of paper, possibly a photocopy of a church membership roll from either St. Paul AME Church or St. John Missionary Baptist Church. The names reviewed correspond with the "1918 Colored Census of the Boynton Township" published in Norfus' *Foundations of Faith* (2010), which features a typed list, described as created from the "church rolls" of these two churches. No original documents are available.]

00:09

EP: She was staying with ___ and he was staying with his aunt.

VN: Who was staying with his aunt?

EP: My father was staying with his aunt, Euturphy Thompson[1]. Euturphy Thompson was his aunt.

VN: Euturphy Thompson was his aunt?

EP: Wilfred. My father's name was Wilfred Thompson. Euturphy Thompson was his aunt.

VN: So Wilfred and Vernon were brothers and sisters?

EP: No, they were two sisters' children.

VN: So Wilfred was Euturphy's actual-

[1] Euturphy Glinton Thompson (1874-1947)

EP: Euturphy's nephew, and the two sisters- Vernon and my father were two sisters' children. Euturphy was Vernon's- Wilfred's mother was dead when he was born. She died in childbirth. She was in Nassau.

VN: But she was a Thompson too?

EP: That was my- that would have been my grandmother. I don't know what her name was.

01:48

VN: Where did you live at when you were – you lived on 12th?

EP: You talking about my father? He lived in Nassau. He came here- his aunt came here- he came here with her. He came with- he was older than Vernon- she had other children, you know. He came from Nassau with them. He always lived with them.

02:28

VN: So they were like brothers, even though they were cousins growing up. Euturphy had been here for a long time.

EP: Yeah, it had been a long time.

VN: I don't think they had anybody from that church. From the Episcopal Church? They don't have them on here. They just have St. Paul.

EP: I tell you somebody else was a member of that Episcopal Church. The Deans was members of the Episcopal Church. Ms. Dean was a member of the Episcopal Church. Somebody would remember. Somebody else who'd remember- all those folks are from Nassau. They remember the Episcopal Church.

03:38

VN: I wonder why they don't have that. They only have people that's on here. So how did my Uncle Ed[2] end up getting married?

EP: He met her in Daytona.

VN: It was in Daytona?

EP: She was living in Daytona, he met her in Daytona. In fact, I think somewhere around in that area, I think that's where your grandfather- all them come from somewhere up there.

VN: That's where my Aunt Cora went back to live, in Daytona. Who was his wife? Ed's wife? Who was he married to?

EP: Frances Johnson

VN: He married Frances Johnson?

04:45

EP: She didn't belong to the Episcopal Church, she belonged to the Methodist Church. He did too.

[2] Willie Edward Meeks (1878–btwn. 1930 & 1940)

05:05

VN: They lived on 12th?

EP: uh-huh [yes]

VN: Where did you live as a little girl?

EP: We lived on the canal bank. It wasn't a street on there, it was called the "canal bank".

VN: It was called the canal?

EP: It was called the canal bank, over there. There wasn't no street. You know where 13th Avenue is now? That used to be called "Canal Bank." There was no street through there. They used to call it "over on the canal."

VN: -had a dirt road?

EP: uh-huh [yes] There was Main and Bookers over there. Mr. Booker[3] was over there. They lived there. The Harveys[4] lived there. You'll have to ask your mama some of these.

VN: They've got Hartley.

EP: Harveys. They lived next to my grandmamma.[5] The Harveys lived over there. __ lived over there, the canal bank.

06:33

VN: That's where Euturphy lived?

EP: Yeah.

VN: And Ms. Colebrooks lived there too?

EP: Ms. Colebrooks lived where 10th Avenue is. Mr. Gardner, they lived on 10th Avenue, Martin Luther King Boulevard it is now[6]. The Wells lived on, I believe, King Boulevard, the Roberts lived on Martin Luther King Boulevard, Josephine Smith lived on Martin Luther King Boulevard, the Deans lived on Martin Luther King Boulevard. When I was born, a man had a quarter strip, called Arthur Johnson on 10th Avenue, called Arthur Johnson quarters.

VN: Arthur Johnson quarters?

07:49

EP: Uh-huh. It was on 10th Avenue, that's where we were born.

VN: Where's that? Seacrest way?

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[3] Moses and Savanna Booker and family was noted on the 1930 census living along the canal.
[4] Joe and Maggie Harvey and children was noted on the 1930 census living along the canal.
[5] Euturphy Glinton Thompson (1874-1947), actually a great aunt.
[6] The street's original name was Wells Avenue. It was renamed NE 10th Avenue in 1953 when all town street names were replaced with quadrant/numbers. In 1984, it was renamed "Martin Luther King Boulevard."

EP: Arthur Johnson quarters was on the other side of the Episcopal Church[7]. It was east of the Episcopal Church on Martin Luther King Boulevard.

VN: Those apartments –

EP: -apartments, not Vern and Julia's apartment, but the other apartments.

VN: On the east side of the church.

EP: Uh-huh. East side of the church.

VN: That's where you were born?

EP: Was called Arthur Johnson's quarters.

VN: Twenty or thirty years later, I was born there.

EP: You kidding.

VN: I used to go across the street, Uncle Brian and them house and sit next to the church when they used to be singing those songs and playing them back. So that was called Arthur Johnson's quarters.

EP: yeah. You remember the man had the restaurant- what was his name? He was married to Ms. Anna Harris at that time. Oh I can't think of that, think of that man's name. It must have been a mighty long time- He accumulated property- and then he built a two story building next to Vernon Thompson and them house. Ophelia and all, on 10th Avenue. What was his name? He's married to Anna Harris. And he had a restaurant, and he had it in Boynton for a long time, because he accumulated-

VN: Can't think of his name? Who was Arthur Johnson?

EP: I don't know. Arthur Johnson was the man who owned the quarters where we were born.

10:09

EP: Well, if you- what'd you say, incorporated in 1920-

VN: 1920.

EP: 1920. I don't know why they don't have some of those people.

VN: Well, the ones that have the little star next to them, the first one is Andrews, was Martha and J Andrews. Who was the J? It says Martha and J Andrews[8].

EP: They didn't live on 10th Avenue. They lived on 11th Avenue. They lived across from Uncle Meeks. That's where they lived. They lived across the street, and that's what they called Andrews addition, going- Just as Wells addition- Roberts addition was on 10th Avenue, Meeks and Andrews was on 11th Avenue, corner of 11th Avenue.

11:13

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[7] St Cuthbert's Episcopal Church, 214 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Boynton Beach, Fla.

[8] John Andrews (1859-?) and wife Martha Andrews (1878-1932) lived on Central Avenue, later named 11th Avenue. In 1930, John was a carpenter and Martha a dressmaker.

VN: So he lived across the street from my granddaddy Wash or from Ed?

EP: Ed Meeks.

VN: On 11th?

EP: On 11th.

VN: What did he do, Andrews?

EP: I guess they were farmers, I don't know.

VN: It's got "CARP" so I guess that's a carpenter. They got CARP on here, so that stands for carpenter.

EP: He might have been a carpenter, I don't know.

VN: He had a wooden house?

EP: It might have been.

VN: They have any kids?

EP: They had one. No. I don't remember that. – no, that was Josephine Smith on 10th Avenue who had the children. I don't know.

VN: They just have a J here, his name was James or John-

EP: I don't know. I don't know who would know. His wife, and Mrs. Williams[9], got killed on the railroad track one morning, the railroad track one morning, but I don't remember, they might have had children, I don't remember. But I remember-

VN: They got killed in a railroad accident?

EP: I remember them being run over on the railroad track, Mr. Andrews' wife.

VN: When was this? What year was this?

EP: And they had another Smith on 10th Avenue, that Josephine Smith and there's Martha Smith. Thomas and Martha Smith. If I'm not mistaken, I think that was Vernon Smith's mother and father. Had a sister named Erma. You could ask your mama that.

[13:40- 15:28 difficult to understand due to condition of tape]

VN: What was her husband's name? William?

EP: Martha Smith.

VN: Martha Smith was his sister?

EP: No, that was Mr. Smith's wife. See there was two Smiths lived there, lived on 10th Avenue. Three Smiths: Frank Smith, Martha Smith, and her husband, I don't know- it might be Thomas, and it might be

[9] 28 April 1932 Martha Andrews and Rebecca Williams were killed while walking south along the tracks from their farm in the north. Miami Herald, 1932-04-29.

Vernon's mother and father- and Josephine Smith. Josephine Smith was the one who had the restaurant with the two story building cross from, cross from Ms. Enid [?]. A rooming house, she had a rooming house. She had a restaurant downstairs. Josephine Smith.

VN: She had a two story building with a restaurant downstairs?

EP: uh-huh [yes] Ms. Dean had a grocery store downstairs. [?] A wooden building. They had been there for years.

VN: They had a two story too?

EP: Two story ____ concrete

[damaged area of tape]

15:28

EP: The first preacher there, when we were born, because my sister lived with him, and his name was Epps. Reverend Epps. Reverend Epps, he was pastor of the Methodist Church.

VN: Which pastor?

EP: Epps.

VN: What Methodist church? What church was that that was Methodist?

EP: St. Paul Methodist Church. My sister was born in '25 and he was the pastor of the Methodist Church then. And they, I think they had just come over on 10th Avenue at that time. They moved from- where did Methodist Church move from? Methodist Church moved- I think they said it was going north on Federal Highway. I think the Baptist Church was down further.

VN: St. John?

EP: uh-huh [yes]

VN: I haven't gotten into that, but I think it was down where the old Winn Dixie used to be.

EP: Somewhere down there.

16:49

VN: Who was this Irene Butler?

EP: Irene Butler. Irene Butler was a teacher in West Palm Beach who lived with the Andrews when she came to teach at Boynton Elementary School. It was Boynton Elementary School for years and years. But I remember she lived- I don't know where she was from, but she was in Palm Beach, but she would come down on the week, you know, on Sunday, because she taught school.

VN: She teach on Sunday?

17:33

EP: She came down from- she came down to Boynton on Sunday, so she could be here to go to school on Monday, you know.

VN: Oh, from West Palm.

EP: Yes, she was from West Palm.

VN: They have her down here. “Irene and James Butler” She was married?

EP: Irene Butler? That was Reverend Butler’s- James Butler’s wife[10].

VN: She was the schoolteacher?

[air conditioning comes on, obscuring sound]

EP: No, she wasn’t. It was another Irene Butler. I don’t know whether that woman was named Irene. She lived with the Andrews. But Irene Butler was Rev Butler’s first wife. They lived right there on 11th Avenue. Now, they had a two story building too.

VN: On 10th also?

0:18:34

EP: On 11th Avenue. That was Bill Butler. Bill Butler’s mother and father. Miss Josephine was not their mother and father.

VN: What kind of store did they have?

EP: Evidently, she must have ran a restaurant, cause there was always talked about her bread pudding. They would buy bread pudding. I guess he farmed. She must have had a restaurant because they always talked about her bread pudding and how she would sell bread pudding for five cents a slice.

VN: Five cents a slice.

EP: I think it was less than five cents a slice, it must have been five cents a bread pudding.

VN: What about 11th, they live in the middle?

EP: 11th Avenue, they live right there where Sarah Jane got an apartment, you know? Right down on the corner. That used to be a two story building. And I think it was a storm or something – no, they had a fire. And then they –

VN: The pink one?

EP: yeah.

VN: That’s where Ms Whatyoucallit stay. Miss Beulah.

EP: Right there on the corner where Miss Beulah stay. That was Irene and Reverend Butler. And cross the street from them, right across the street from them, was the Taylors. They’d been here many years, too. I don’t know what church they belonged to. I remember- the last name is harder.

21:09

[10] Irene Curry Butler (1891-1930) was the first wife of James Alengton Butler (1892-1986)

VN: You know these other name is, Henry Bogalusa?

EP: Who?

VN: The third name.

EP: Huh?

VN: The third name on there [referring to sheet] I couldn't tell what that was.

EP: Henry-

VN: Bulerson, or- Lolason

EP: Henry Culverson[11]. That's who that was, they lived on 10th Avenue.

VN: Culverson?

EP: Culverson, yeah that's it.

[22:01-25:24 difficult to understand due to condition of tape, much lost]

22:23

VN: I didn't know what that name was. You think he went to St. Paul? What did they do?

EP: I don't know-

VN: Where did they live?

EP: 10th Avenue

VN: They had a house? A two story house?

EP: No, smaller.

VN: You know where they come from? That's a weird name.

24:02 [damaged tape]

VN: Davis Janitreese. I thought it was Tommy and Janet Treese. Could be Fanny.

EP: Cross the tracks. Off of Federal Highway.

25:24

EP: It was past- you know where Scobees Funeral Home is?

VN: Cross the canal, and then go across the tracks.

EP: There was no way of getting, the only way- you had to go around some kind of way, but the only way from Federal Highway was no street there-

VN: So, just Federal Highway, and a path

[11] In the 1930 US Federal Census, Henry Culverson was a 50 year old laborer living on 10th Avenue.

EP: right.

26:00

VN: Where the Girtmans lived. There was no roads on canal, which was 13th? There was no roads past the canal?

EP: There was a road between the canal and where the people live on 13th now. It wasn't a paved road.

VN: It was just a dirt road.

26:42

VN: Nobody lived- no Blacks lived past 10th? Where else did Blacks live? I was told we couldn't pass 9th Avenue. That's where the Whites lived at.

EP: The Whites?

VN: White people.

EP: Definitely some.

VN: Definitely some of them.

27:22

EP: You didn't know nothing about Seacrest. The only way you had into Boynton was the Federal Highway. And they had a railroad track on 10th Avenue where you could come across the 10th, and that's how you got into Boynton Black Town. That's the only way [?]

VN: on Federal

EP: Just like you come across there now. That's the way it has always been. What that fish market- the Dutch Mill. You knew you was coming into Boynton. When you knew to turn into Boynton, you saw the Dutch Mill. That Dutch Mill, that fish market, that must have been there way before I was born. You knew how to get into Boynton when you saw Dutch Mill. [cross talk] You turned on 10th, coming west.

VN: So it's always been Federal

28:32

EP: Now before that time, lot of people used to live east of Federal Highway. Just like they used to have the church east of Federal Highway. I guess people lived there, but I don't know who those people were.

28:53

VN: ok

EP: You've got Charlotte, some kind of Hartley here. I think there was two Hartleys, but I can't remember.

VN: That's Cadie, that must be Charlie.

EP: Cadie and Charlie Hartley.

VN: Yeah.

EP: It might have been kin of Mr. Leroy Hartley. Leroy Hartley, Julia and Leroy Hartley, you know they lived on railroad track too. Where Carl Washington live now, that's where they were living.

29:36 [phone rings]

[29:43-30:11 moving camera]

30:11

EP: This type of stuff takes a long long time. I know when they were doing Charlie Patrick, LaFrance Hotel, ooo Lord.

VN: I was sitting in there with them and my mom was telling me that the LaFrance Hotel was named after Ed's daughter?

EP: Who?

VN: Uncle Ed[12]. Did he have a daughter named Frances?

EP: No, his wife named Frances, his daughter was named- your mama'd remember them. Uncle Meeks had, he had two daughters and one son.

VN: Uncle Ed?

EP: Two daughters and one son. The boy named Boise. Your mama- she and I were talking about that the other day.

VN: I remember that name, Boise.

EP: Yeah, your uncle Boise. He died here. You were born when he died.

31:19

VN: Ed had Boise Meeks.

EP: Boise. Cause your mama told me the other day, both of them still living. Can't think of those names.

VN: Cause you know, I've got a sister, she passed, that my mom named LaFrances.

EP: Eh?

VN: I have a sister that passed when she was a little baby, that mom had, named LaFrances.

EP: no frances?

VN: It was "La" L A.

EP: She named it after the hotel?

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[12] Francenia Johnson Patrick (1913–1988) was the step-daughter of Willie Edward Meeks (1878–btwn 1930 & 1940)

VN: Yeah.

EP: After Charlie and thems hotel? LaFrance Hotel.

32:23

VN: She said that was her cousin's name. She said it was one of Ed's, I don't know if it's one of his kids or niece, somehow she was related. Who's the guy- the hotel was childless

EP: Yeah, she was related to Meeks. That's who she was related to, she wasn't related to Ed Meeks, uh, Leola–in fact, she named the LaFrance Hotel after her.

VN: That's all- Peter Jackson, you don't know who that was?

EP: Peter Jackson, I don't- I can't- Ernest and Lilly McCade- I don't-

33:34

VN: I can't imagine there being a lot of coconut trees in Boynton. Ain't a lot of coconut trees in Boynton.

EP: Not now. But it used to be, it used to be some coconut trees in Boynton. See they kill all the coconut trees.

VN: Just along the coast? Who killed them? The developers?

EP: The city killed them. They said there was some kind of disease in the coconut tree. They killed them, come around putting stuff in the tree-

VN: When was that? Recent?

[progressively difficult to hear]

EP: That must have been in the '50s. Your mama remember that, happened in the '50s. Yeah, they killed all the coconut trees. In Boynton don't got coconuts and crabs. They killed all the crabs ___ , then they kill all the coconuts, then they killed all the mang- we had what you call guavas. You never see those guava trees around here anymore. Used to be a lot of guava trees, a lot of mulberry trees. You don't see none of that stuff no more. Ernest McCade [reading from sheet] Nathan and Anne Major[13]. That must have been Mr. Major. They lived in a house between 11th and 12th Avenues. He had a house that reached out to 12th Avenue. It was behind. They had the front of their house stole one time. Used to be kind of an apartment house. And Mr. Major used to live back in an attic back there. I don't know where he lived before that time.

VN: He had no sisters?

EP: They had two children, Evelyn and- she died in Delray. Evelyn left and went up north. Blanche, Blanche, right. I remember those two children. Evelyn went to Delray. They had some boys, but I don't remember the boys' names.

VN: Did they have four boys? Pretty big family.

[13] Nathaniel H. Major (1872–1935)

EP: I think they had three or four boys. But I remember the two girls, Evelyn and Blanche.

VN: They lived on 11th Avenue?

EP: Between 11th and 12th, off the railroad tracks. From the railroad tracks.

VN: Did they have a two story building too? Instead of a house? Sylvester Allen's dad?

EP: Sylvester Allen. [unintelligible]

37:22

VN: Ed Meeks lived on 11th. Ed Meeks.

EP: Yeah.

37:33

EP: The house that he lived in was moved down here from Jacksonville Florida someone told me in 1904.

[37:49-39-44 chiefly unintelligible due to condition of tape]

VN: It was moved down here?

EP: From Jacksonville.

EP: He built a house in Jacksonville in 1904, but I don't know when-

VN: He built the house in 1904?

EP: with porches all around. Had porches all the way around.

VN: That sounds kind of strange.

EP: ___ Porches all around. Porch all around the front, all around the back.

VN: Makes sense!

39:08

VN: How many kids did they have, Ed and Frances?

EP: Ed and Frances. Frances had one child, with Johnson

[chiefly unintelligible]

39:44

EP: Is that Cecil and Allie you got here?

VN: Cecil and Allie Milton[14]. Cicero.

EP: Cicero. Name sounds familiar to me, but I can't place it. Cicero.

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[14] Cicero Milton (farmer) and wife Allie were listed as residents in the Boynton section of the WPB directory of 1918.

40:33

VN: Says they were farmers. There's an Isaac Miller.

EP: Isaac Mueller, Miller.

VN: Isaiah. Rivona.

EP: I know Isanova. I think he came from Delray. He was married to Claude and ___ sister.

[41:13-49:16 chiefly unintelligible due to condition of tape; fragments of interview transcribed below]

VN: The name Allie? I can't make this out. I think it says Rivona.

EP: Isanova. He was

41:38

EP: You'll think he saying all the ____ white folks lie? They had the Ku Klux Klan up here one time. [unintelligible]

VN: Isaac Miller used fight the white folks?

41:59

EP: It's not like you'll have now, you all go sit all ___. Used to have to stay in the church, have a meeting in the church. Willie Miller and Isaac, they were so against the way the white people were treating- they burned a cross over on 11th Avenue. The White folks that go across the bridge over there- oh yeah, they used to –

VN:

EP: No, in church, you weren't allowed to see hardly anything. That was in the '40s, I know. That was in the '40s. There were big militant people. They came to what was happening in Boynton. ___ They had eyes in Willie Miller. They were in the same family but they weren't brothers. I used to go to Peace and Love Church and they would raise some ___ See, Black folk weren't allowed to go across that bridge on Federal Highway, but they could go to Seacrest.

VN: Seacrest was a road in the '40s and '50s? A dirt road?

43:36

EP: Yeah, that's what I say. Black folk couldn't live over there, that's what I mean to say. _____ It was so bad one time, fighting for justice, that they burned a cross over on Railroad Street[15].

VN: The Ku Klux Klan?

EP: The KKK or somebody burned a cross.

VN: That's in the '40s?

[15] Possibly referring to December 1948, when a cross was burned next to Club Continental during the mayoral election. Purinton ran on a "equal rights" platform.

EP: That was in the ‘40s. They didn’t want the Black folk to go on the beaches. It used to be something.

44:55

You take that Michael Wilson. Michael Wilson is who the Wilson Pool was named after[16]. You know who he was? He was the president of the PTA.

VN: Who was Michael Wilson’s parents?

EP: I don’t know where he came from. He was president of the PTA where my children was going to school. And that what they named Wilson Recreation Center. Mr. Michael Wilson.

VN: President of PTA in what year?

EP: That was in the late ‘40s when my children was going to school. He was president for a long time. That’s when they named Wilson Recreation Center after him. Do you know people are ___ he was a Black man___, a deacon ___

[unintelligible]

46:38

VN: How old was he when he passed?

EP: I guess he might have been in his 80s.

VN: [asks about where he lived]

EP: on 12th

[unintelligible exchange]

48:06

VN: Do you remember Auntie Cora? Ed was married to Frances. When did they get married?

EP: I don’t know. He died in 1933. They must have married in the ‘20s. Ms. Frances, she had daughter, Francine and he had a son ____ two sisters’ names

VN: And he died in 1933?

EP: Yeah Ed died in ’33.

49:16

VN: Those were the only Meeks that were down here?

EP: I don’t know what year your grandfather came. I don’t know what year he came here. I knew [tape skip] married to your grandmamma, I don’t know. I don’t know what year he came here. But he must

[16] The Wilson Pool and Park have always been reported as named after Deacon Theodore Wilson, a local Black advocate of civil rights. The pool was renamed in 2008 after John Denson, one of the pool's first lifeguards.

have been- your grandmamma must have met him here, because he had Joe, and he was married to one of Mr. Roberts' daughters.

VN: You mean Ebby and Essie Roberts? Lizzie Roberts?

EP: Lizzie Roberts, uh-huh.

50:30

EP: Lizzie and Ed Roberts. I think his name was Ed too.

VN: I have a couple of Roberts on here. Eddy Roberts, Ebby Roberts, and a Lizzie Roberts, Bernice Roberts, farmhand.

51:04

EP: Essie Roberts, Ebby Roberts, Lizzie. I don't know. But I know Mr. Roberts, Joe's grandmother was name Lizzie. So Mr. Roberts' name could have been Ebby. It'd have to be, what I say, Edward? We call him Ed Roberts. But Ebby Roberts and Lizzie Roberts was Joe's grandparents.

VN: Ebby and Lizzie was Uncle Joe's grandparents.

EP: Essie Roberts. Essie Roberts.

VN: Cause he had about six kids.

EP: Yeah, they did. They had a lot of –

VN: They had six kids already, but I think they were older. The youngest one was about as old as grandma. I got to interview Eddie Mitchell, cause he's the one who says he introduced them, and they got married. Where did the Roberts live at? The Roberts lived on 10th Avenue, right across the track, where that church, Deliverance, or that Kenis [?] charter school they built there, that was Roberts' property. All the way down 10th Avenue, it was known as Roberts addition on that side of the street. On the other side of the street, it was known as Wells Addition. You go into the courthouse, and it used to be Wells, it used to be that before. There wasn't no 11th Avenue or 10th Avenue, it was Roberts Addition and Wells Addition. You didn't go looking for no house on 10th Avenue because there wasn't no 10th Avenue. On 11th Avenue, you had Andrews Addition, then you had Meeks Addition. There wasn't no 11th Avenue. It was Andrews and Meeks Addition.

[53:33- 1:01:13 chiefly unintelligible due to condition of tape; fragments of interview transcribed below]

54:40

VN: Who was Martha __ Smith?

EP: Martha Smith. That was Vernon Smith's ___. But Martha Smith was Vernon Smith's mom and dad. They lived on 10th Avenue. Josephine Smith was not related to them that I know of. She might have been. But she lived on 10th Avenue, she the one I tell you had a restaurant, a two story building with a restaurant on 10th Avenue. Sarah Jane__ 10th Avenue. Dillard King, Hattie and Dillard King. They lived on

12th Avenue. These were brothers, brothers and sisters, these Kings. Now Dillard and William King were brothers. Marie King was their sister. I didn't know their children.

[something about Nathan Major, living on 12th Avenue, unintelligible]

57:40

VN: The school was called Boynton Beach Elementary back then? Poinciana?

EP: [chiefly unintelligible, talking about Poinciana School]

VN: Right where it is now.

EP: Right where it is now. __ five years old.

VN: __ one room?

EP: ____ the principal there. ___ All the children at that time was in Boynton. When you got rid of___

VN: Blacks and whites?

59:30

EP: Blacks didn't have no high school. When you go to high school, you got to go to Palm Beach Industrial High[17]. That's right, they didn't have Carver at that time. You had to go to Palm Beach Industrial High.

VN: ?

EP: That was in the late '30s. Industrial High [?] They didn't have Carver High School.[18]

VN: __ Industrial High __

1:00:40

EP: Then Spady's, you know Spady's used to be a high school-[19]

VN: Traveling to West Palm kind of took a while.

EP: I know Francenia[20] got a high- Francenia went to Bethune-Cookman, which was a school, it was a high school. She stayed with Mr. Bethune-Cook.

1:01:13

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[17] Industrial High School opened in 1914 as the first high school for African Americans in Palm Beach County; the last class graduated in 1950.
[18] In 1937, the Delray County Training School was renamed George Washington Carver High School and expanded to include grades 1 through 12.
[19] The campus of S. D. Spady Elementary School in Delray Beach is the original site of Carver High School.
[20] Francenia Johnson Patrick (1913–1988)

EP: My cousin Francenia stayed with- See, before Bethune-Cookman became a college, it was a high school[21]. Francenia stayed with Mr. Bethune-Cook in Daytona.

1:01:39

VN: Do you know Julia McKenzie? Got Julia McKenzie on here.

EP: I don't know who that is. Cleo Phoenix[22], they say he was a teacher. Cleo Phoenix. Was he the principal-

VN: You never heard of Cleo Phoenix?

EP: He might have been the principal- at one time, I don't know. This Maggie Pugh[23]. I don't know Maggie Pugh. There was a Maggie Pugh who lived in a- Meeks low house. I don't know how old a woman she was.

VN: She lived in what Meeks house?

EP: The Meeks, they had low house, a work side, and they had another house on the other side [? crosstalk] on 11th Avenue. There was a Maggie Pugh, here in a little house, I didn't know her. She drank so [glitch in tape] The doctor told her if she didn't stop drinking, she would die. She drank down a half pint of liquor they said, and she drank that, she said she's going to see how death felt. Now, that's the only Maggie Pugh I knew.

VN: Did she die?

EP: Yeah she died.

VN: She drink it and died.

EP: She drink it and died. Yeah, they told me- that's the only Maggie Pugh that I ever heard of. She lived in ____ I lived in [? crosstalk]

1:04:00

VN: How old was she?

EP: I don't know how old she was. I tell you, I didn't know her. See, what happened to me, I used to come- we left here in '33 with my aunt, but I would come back every summer, cause- I'd come every summer after school let out, I'd come back. So that's why I kept in touch, knew some people, you know, when I got old.

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[21] Bethune-Cookman University is a private historically Black school in Daytona Beach, Florida. Originally Daytona Cookman Collegiate Institute (1923–1941), the result of the merger in 1923 of the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Girls, founded in 1904 by Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune and Cookman Institute for Boys, founded in Jacksonville in 1872 by Rev. D.S. Darnell. Later, it changed its name to Bethune–Cookman College (1941–2007) when it became a four-year baccalaureate program.

[22] Cleo Phoenix Greene (1900-1924) earned her teaching certificate in 1922 in Delray, then married Albert Greene shortly before her death.

[23] On the 1920 census, Maggie Pugh (1895–1937) was 25 years old, living next door to Thomas and Martha Smith, no occupation. Probably not the same Maggie Pugh as the one who drank.

VN: Ok, so you used to go down to Miami.

1:04:37

EP: Yeah, I lived in Miami ten years.

VN: Where'd you live in in Miami?

EP: I lived in south Miami.

1:04:58

VN: Who was the preacher back then?

EP: At the Methodist Church?

VN: St. Paul's.

1:05:01

EP: St. Paul's. They had Reverend Epps, Reverend Holten, they had Reverend Hills, they had Reverend Eldy Kennedy, they had McKensie I think it was a preacher named McKensie. Either McKensie or McKenly, one of them. I remember those preachers. I remember Reverend Elsie Johnson. Elsie Johnson passed through St. Paul twice. He passed before I came, I guess before I was born or something. But then when I came back here to live, he passed through that church again.

VN: So they didn't live here, they moved here? None of those preachers are on here.

EP: Reverend Epps, Reverend Hills, Reverend Holten and his family, Eldy Kennedy- they had one child that was born here, their son Eldy. Reverend Hills had a son born here, was a child, now I used to stay with them. I was a little bitty girl and I stayed over there with them all the time. And his wife had a boy. Now, I wanted to know where the baby come from, and they told me a baby came out of a tree- they had an oak tree in the back yard. So then, I went out to the oak tree to see - _____ and the baby in the oak tree.

VN: How old was you?

EP: I guess I must have been about five years old. I was looking for that baby in that oak tree, cause she done come over with this baby. I wanted to know where the baby came, and they said living in the oak tree.

1:07:10

EP: Then there was Reverend Small.

VN: He one of the pastors of St. Paul?

EP: Small, pastor of St. Paul. [difficult to hear] He was passionate, a lover of little children, Reverend Small. That was in the '40s. Reverend Holten, Reverend Hill, Brother Epps, Brother Eldy Kennedy, all those preachers, they had them during the '20s and early '30s

1:07:53

VN: Who was the richest Black person?

EP: richest Black person?

VN: Yeah. In Boynton.

EP: The person that lived on this side, that was most prominent? That was Ed Meeks. Wells or Roberts then. See they weren't all living over here on this side. See a lot of other people were living across the highway.

VN: Then they got pushed out?

EP: Then went they begin to build houses and what-not, people began to move into their houses.

VN: Did you ever know Major Boynton[24]?

EP: Who?

VN: Major Boynton, the one the town named after.

EP: Major Boynton. No. I never knew, or if I did-

1:09:09

VN: So Whites and Blacks didn't really mix. We see them and they see- Did you ever hear or know about any Indians - Native Americans?

EP: Indians?

VN: Know where they live at?

EP: No, I don't remember no Indians. I guess there was some Indians.

VN: There's a reserve out west. Loxahatchee. Wildlife reserve in Boynton. Out west.

EP: I don't know.

VN: That's where my history is pointing to where they lived at. Cause there's some old Indian mounds out there.

1:10:15

EP: I didn't do a lot of growing up- I came back.

VN: You knew a lot of the people. I got some idea. What I was going to do-

EP: Waxing quarterly [?] Mr. Waxman

VN: Going to draw a map of the quarters.

EP: He was a White fella. He owned a lot of houses. In fact, most people bought a lot of houses from Mr. Waxman.

[24] Nathan Smith Boynton (1837–1911)

VN: Waxman? Now they were saying that the Waxman quarters were the ones over there.

EP: The Waxman quarters on 11th Avenue? I know he had a house on 11th Avenue.

1:11:10 [moving chair and camera]

VN: What I did, I drew a map one time, I drew a map of Boynton

[1:11:34- chiefly unintelligible due to condition of tape; fragments of interview transcribed below]

[VN drawing unseen map and describing areas]

1:12:11

EP: He had houses everywhere. He had houses on 11th.

VN: Waxman?

EP: Waxman. Mr. Dean had houses on 11th. If she was in the right mind, she could tell you more. Doris Dean. Mr. Waxman was all over this place, here a long time. When I was a little girl, Mr. Waxman was coming in ___.

[VN apparently mapping location of a church and other landmarks in consultation with EP]

1:14:09

EP: There's always been a St. Paul's. They moved the church over here from where in was on the highway. St. John, too.

VN: They moved there because someone bought the land?[25]

EP: I guess so. See, the people who really knew the history are practically all dead now.

[VN drawing unseen map and describing locations of buildings]

1:15:30

EP: Andrews was on 11th Avenue, Roberts and Wells was on 10th Avenue.

1:15:48

VN: Mrs. Dean on which side of the street?

EP: The same side. On the south side.

VN: Down by the railroad tracks?

EP: Uh-huh [yes]

VN: where apartments is now. Then a two story store.

EP: Yeah, that's Ms. Smith, Josephine Smith. She had a restaurant. She had a two-story building across the street from the Deans.

[25] The Black community and its church moved west after segregation was instituted in 1924.

VN: I wanted to take the information and try and draw a map. I wish I had a copy of the book that they have, that they actually have for the history of Boynton. You see, it's all about Major Boynton and you wouldn't think that Black-

EP: I had that and I gave it to somebody. ____, we're trying to give them some history of Boynton.

VN: Yeah, I'm going to talk with her too. I was going to talk to Eddie Mitchell cause he has a lot of information and he's still pretty sharp. ___ Ms. Girtman, all in the same board. I found out my grandma's on that board, too. I found my grandma's on that board, too.

EP: Yeah, it's a lot of work, it's a lot of work.

VN: Yes, it's a lot of work, but it's important , it's history. Ain't nobody else going to tell it for us. And you know, when I went to the historical society, that's the first thing I noticed,

From 1:18:09 static